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BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

Women and the Trades, Pittsburg, 1907-08. By ELIZABETH BEARDSLEY BUTLER. ("The Pittsburg Survey," edited by PAUL UNDERWOOD KELLOGG.) New York: Charities Publication Committee, 1909. 8vo, pp. 440. \$1.72 postpaid.

As a part of the study of industrial conditions in greater Pittsburg, conducted under the name of the "Pittsburg Survey," Miss Butler investigated the lot of the women wage-earners. Her book, now published for the Russell Sage Foundation, presents a comprehensive survey of all the Pittsburg industries of the factory type in which ten or more women are employed. Retail stores and telegraph and telephone exchanges are included, because these establishments, although not factories, are like them in their organization and in their dealings with employees. In all, some 27 industries are included, carried on in 449 different establishments, employing 22,185 women. In the mercantile houses 7,540 women were employed; in the stogy industry 2,611; in the laundries, 2,185; in the metal trades, 1,954; nearly one thousand each in the making of crackers and confectionery; and smaller numbers in the other occupations, down to the 14 employed in the making of trunks and suit-cases.

The data were gathered by means of interviews with employees and forewomen, with settlement workers and other well-informed outsiders, and with the women employed. In some cases the pay-rolls were thrown open to Miss Butler. By painstaking effort a large mass of definite facts was ascertained, including the number of women employed in each establishment, the actual weekly earnings of piece-workers and time-workers, the extent of overtime work, and the amount of time lost through irregularity of employment. The results are set forth in orderly array for each industry in succession, and the concluding chapters summarize the whole. In regard to each of the industries considered a concise account of the nature of the processes in which the women are engaged is followed by a description of the conditions under which the work is performed—the sanitary environment of the workers, wages, hours of employment—and a discussion of the total effect of these influences upon the well-being of the employees.

The distinctive industries of Pittsburg, the production of iron and steel products, are those which offer least employment to women. The greater number of the women whose work Miss Butler describes are employed in such occupations as are to be found in any large city; they are laundry-workers, telephone operators, saleswomen, garment-workers. In regard to their experiences Miss Butler's account is largely corroboration of the testimony regarding these occupations in other cities. The laundry business is described in much detail, and the heavy strain imposed upon telephone operators is brought out by comparison with

the Canadian official report on the Toronto telephone exchange. The sweat-shop still flourishes in Pittsburg's hill-district.

Certain women's trades, however, if not limited to Pittsburg, have at least reached an unusual expansion there. Among these stand stogy-making, canning and pickling, candy-making, and the metal trades. To these industries the author gives the fulness of treatment that their importance demands. One would not expect to find women employed in the iron and steel industries, outside of the office staff, but Miss Butler enumerates about two thousand women employed in nut and bolt factories, the winding of electric coils, core-making, and even working as openers in tin-plate works. The stogy industry, with its twenty-five hundred women employees, is perhaps typical of that which is least attractive in the Pittsburg women's trades. It includes large factories, small factories, and sweat-shops. It pays piece-wages often adjusted to a sliding scale which puts a premium on high speed. It turns out a low-grade product at a low price in money and a high price in human life.

It is a somber picture of the life of the woman wage-earner that Miss Butler presents. Certain factories are described as models in their arrangement, but the workroom is too often a menace to health. The wages of 60 per cent. of the women fall below seven dollars a week, and only 17 per cent. receive over eight dollars. Yet a conservative estimate of the minimum cost of subsistence for a self-supporting woman is seven dollars. The hours are not normally excessive, but in the majority of industries there are rush seasons, when work must be carried far into the night. Overspeeding, too, is common, and the resulting nervous strain is apparent, both in the inability of the girls to keep the pace for more than three or four years, and in the diminished vitality that the worn-out wage-earners bring to the care of a family upon marriage.

Miss Butler gives attention to the relation of women's work and wages to the labor and earnings of men. She finds that women are paid, on the whole, about half as much as men, where their labor may be compared, but that for the most part women do not compete with men, but take over the processes adapted to their capacity, and to the abbreviated period of their apprenticeship. Only 2.7 per cent. of the women are engaged in what may be called skilled work or handicraft, 23 per cent. in handwork demanding manual dexterity, such as chocolate-dipping, and the remainder in keeping time to machines or the scarcely less mechanical work of wrapping, labeling, and bottle-washing.

The suggestions for betterment on which the author lays stress are better factory laws and better enforcement of them, a living wage for the working-woman, so that she shall not be forced to depend upon subsidies from parents or others, and trade-education, so as to enable a competent girl to advance to more highly skilled processes. But the book is not hortatory in tone. It aims rather to let the facts speak for themselves. This purpose is furthered by a large number of full-page illustrations, and by the detailed tables of the Appendix. A bibliography of the trades described completes the volume. A fuller account of the life of the wage-earners outside of the factory would have aided in measuring the standard of living possible on the incomes received, but where so much has been so well done, it were ungracious to ask for more.

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